CHATHAM PRISON HULKS

CHATHAM HULK

"Chatham Cuffay must have been aware of this military activity when he settled in the town. He gained employment through Captain James Proby, who was Commissioner of Chatham from 1771 to ½1799 when he died. There is a memorial to him in St Mary's Church, Chatham. Earlier, in 1760, Proby had been appointed captain of the war-ship *Thunderer*. Between 1779 and 1789 Chatham Cuffay worked for Proby on one of **the hulks,** which was probably a decommissioned war-ship. He may have been cook and he was also employed on Proby's yacht, *H.M.S. Chatham*."

Hoyles, Martin (2013) *WILLIAM CUFFAY: The Life & Times of a Chartist Leader*, Hansib

- **CHATHAM HULK** Sheer hulk, 714bm, 153 x 32ft. Chatham DY 9.10.1694. BU 10.1813 Chatham
- **CHATHAM** Sheer hulk, 1,691bm, 146 x 46½ft. Chatham DY 2.4.1813. BU

Colledge, J. J.,Warlow, Ben (2006) [1969] *Ships of the Royal Navy: The Complete Record of all* Fighting Ships of the Royal Navy *(Rev. ed.),*London: Chatham Publishing

Appendix Two - Ships Built at Chatham (Compiled by J.J.Colledge)

Launched	Name	Rating	Guns	Tons
9.10.1694	CHATHAM HULK	DY sheer hulk		714
2.4.1813	CHATHAM HULK	DY sheer hulk		1691

MacDougall, Philip (1977) *The Chatham Dockyard Story*, Rochester: Rochester Press

- **HMS Chatham** was a 50-gun fourth-rate launched in 1758. She was used for harbour service from 1793 and was a **powder hulk** from 1805. She was renamed HMS Tilbury in 1810 and was broken up in 1814.

- HMS Chatha**m** was a **sheer hulk** launched in 1813 and broken up in 1876.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Chatham

Decisions of the Court of King's Bench: Upon the Laws Relating to the Poor.
Edited by Edmound Bolt, Francis Const
Case study of *Jonathan Bowler*, a rigger living in Sheerness and paying money which is stopped out of his pay for the relief of the poor. Previous to this he hired himself as a boy *to Sibourne* who was boastswain of **the Chatham Hulk**, which was in the river Medway.
(SEE CASE STUDY)

PRISON HULKS

Prison hulks were decommissioned ships that authorities used as floating prisons in the 18th and 19th centuries. They were especially popular in England. The term "prison hulk" is not synonymous with the related term, convict ship. A hulk is a ship that is afloat, but incapable of going to sea, whereas convict ships are seaworthy vessels whose purpose was to transport convicted felons from their place of conviction to their place of banishment.

Initial authorization and later expansion of use

Parliament initially intended to use the hulks as a temporary measure and so the first authorization, in 1776, for their use was only for two years. Although some members of Parliament deplored the hulks the 1776 Act lasted for 80 years. Parliament regularly renewed the Act and even extended its scope "for the more severe and effectual punishment of atrocious and daring offenders".

The American Revolutionary War, the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars resulted in the availability of superannuated vessels suitable for conversion to prison hulks. Ships-of-the-line were particularly suitable because of their size; in active service they had accommodations for hundreds of crewmen.Hulks ceased to be used in Great Britain on the final expiry of the Act in 1857.

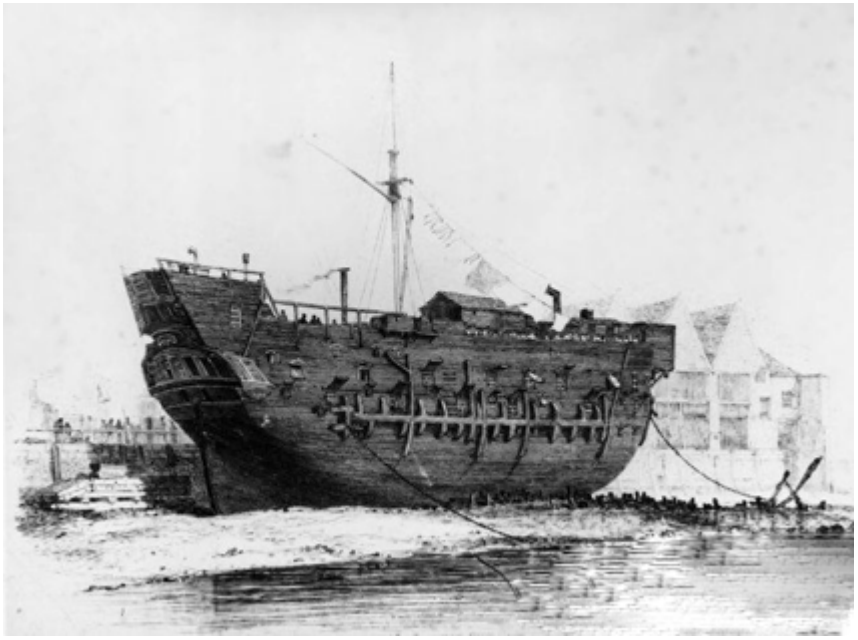
Conversion of decommissioned ships

Converting the ships to prison hulks involved removal of the rigging, masts, rudders, and various other features required for sailing. Some hulks retained some of these features, but all were rendered inoperable or unseaworthy in some way. The internal structure was also reconfigured with various features, including jail cells, in order to accommodate convicted criminals or occasionally prisoners of war.The hulks, which retained only their ability to float, were typically located in harbours. This made them convenient temporary holding quarters for convicts awaiting transportation to Australia and other penal colonies within the British Empire. In 1798 the hulks held more than 1400 out of about 1900 people waiting for transportation to Australia. Most British prison hulks were decommissioned in the 19th century, although suspected and convicted criminals are still confined aboard ships on occasion for various reasons.

Name	Years in Service	Location	Comments
HMSCumberland	1830–1833	Chatham	*Cumberland* was a 74-gun Third-rate launched in 1807, Northfleet. She was converted to a prison hulk in 1830 and was renamed *Fortitude* in 1833. She was put on the sale list in 1870 and was subsequently sold.
HMS *Dolphin*	1824–1830	Chatham	*Dolphin* was originally launched as an East Indiaman named *Admiral Rainier*, which the Navy bought and renamed HMS *Hindostan*. The Admiralty purchased her in 1804 for service as a 50-gun Fourth-rate. She was converted into a 20-gun storeship in 1811. She was renamed again in 1819 as *Dolphin*, and once more in 1831 as *Justitia*, when she became a prison hulk. She was finally sold in 1855.
HMS *Fortitude*	1795–1820	Chatham	*Fortitude* was a 74-gun Third-rate ship of the line launched in 1780. She served as a prison hulk from 1795 and was broken up in 1820.
HMS *Fortitude*	1833–1844	Chatham	HMS *Cumberland* was a 74-gun Third-rate launched in 1807. She was converted to a prison hulk in 1830 and was renamed *Fortitude* in 1833. She was put on the sale list in 1870 and was subsequently sold.
HMS *Canada*	1810–1834	Chatham	*Canada* was a 74-gun Third-rate launched in 1765. She became a prison hulk in 1810 and was broken up in 1834.

HMS *Euryalus*	1825–1847	ChathamandGibraltar	Having taken part in the Battle of Trafalgar and briefly served as Admiral Collingwood's flagship, *Euryalus* was decommissioned in 1825 and converted into a prison hulk for boys at Chatham. In 1847 she was moved to Gibraltar, and was sold for breaking up in 1860.[6]
HMS *Ganymede*	1819–1838	ChathamandWoolwich	*Ganymede* was the French frigate *Hébé* captured in 1809. She was converted to a prison hulk in 1819 and broken up in 1838.
HMS Gelykheid	1807–1814	Gillingham	Equally Gelijkeidt, Gelykheidt, or Gelikheid. On 8 May 1800 a court martial was held at Sheerness, on board HMS Savage on Lieutenant Wheatly and his Clerk, of the Gelykheidprison ship, at Gillingham, for drunkenness and neglect of duty, ungentlemanlike conduct, embezzlement of stores, tyranny, and oppression, but the charges being malicious and ill founded, they were acquitted. In 1803 was stationed in the Humber as Guardship and in 1807 she was fitted out as sheer hulk at Falmouth. She was disposed of in 1814.
MS Justitia	1812–1830	Sheerness	Vice Ad. Richard Onslow seized the Zeeland seized from the Dutch by at Plymouth on 4 March 1796. She was renamed Justitia in 1812 and broken up in 1830, when her name was transferred to Dolphin.
HMS Bellerophon	1815–1824	Sheerness	Bellerophon was a 74-gun Third-rate launched in 1786. Having taken part in the Battle of Trafalgar, she became a prison hulk in 1815, was renamed Captivity in October 1824 and was sold out of service in January 1836.[6]
HMS Retribution	1814–1835	Woolwich and Sheerness	Retribution was a prison hulk launched in 1779 as the 74-gun Third-rate HMS Edgar.Edgar was converted into a prison hulk in 1813, renamed Retribution in 1814 and broken up in 1835.

HMS Chatham	1793–1805	Plymouth	Chatham was a 50-gun Fourth-rate launched in 1758. She was used for harbour service from 1793 and was a powder hulk from 1805. She was renamed Tilbury in 1810 and was broken up in 1814.
HMS Medway	1850–1862	Bermuda	Medway was a 74-gun Third-rate launched in 1812. She was used as a prison hulk after 1847 and was sold in 1865.



CHATHAM'S PRISON HULKS WERE GRIM

1861 - Mutiny in Chatham's prison hulks

A revolt among convicts at St Mary's Prison, Chatham, was put down brutally by the authorities in January 1861. The audacity of the convicts made national news for many weeks and was considered so serious that the Home Secretary intervened personally.

Warders were sacked, officials resigned, and the prison guards' incompetence blamed on the petty jealousies of the older, more disciplined guards on the Chatham hulks and a newer intake of men. *The Times* reported: "A considerable degree of uneasiness, almost amounting to alarm, has been occasioned to the officials of the convict prison on St Mary's Island … in consequence of the disaffection and mutinous conduct of the convicts confined in that establishment."
It all revolved around a convict named Peters, who – with most of the other prisoners – worked every day at nearby Chatham Dockyard.

"Peters, although employed in what is termed as the light labour department, had managed to becoming possessed of a skeleton key … between six and seven o'clock on Saturday morning, Peters and other convicts were in the hall of the prison awaiting their periodical medical examination when Peters took the opportunity to escape the hall by unlocking it with his skeleton key.

"He then crossed the parade grounds to one of the cells occupied by a notorious character named Bennett, who is under sentence of penal servitude for life for numerous burglaries in London and was in the process of unlocking his door when he was seized by the warder before he could accomplish his intentions, the key being thrown to the ground."

It was the cue for revolt. Soon afterwards, the 1,000 convicts held at St Mary's began their protest. First they started disturbing the minister in the chapel service by "hooting yelling, cheering and other marks of disapprobation, although no act of violence was resorted to".

Mutiny in Chatham's prison hulks » Medway Memories
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